

**SYSTEM AND METHODS FOR THE FLEXIBLE USAGE OF ELECTRONIC  
CONTENT IN HETEROGENOUS DISTRIBUTED ENVIRONMENTS****ABSTRACT**

A system and methods supporting flexible content usage in distributed environments, where users may have access to electronic content from multiple disparate sources and rendering systems. The invention consists of a personal content management system and a collection of virtual information portfolios. The personal content management system manages user authentication, handles content uploads either from a public source such as a user or from an electronic content store, and transforms the content for specific rendering devices, thus providing ubiquitous access to said electronic content. The virtual information portfolio supports content distribution across multiple physical locations while providing support for multiple logical content groupings, including recursive content groupings. The virtual information portfolio allows logical content structure to be presented to users through a variety of formats, and enables the user to sell, share, lend, exchange, and trade digitally protected and non-protected electronic content directly with other users or entities.